

chirikure
CHIRIKURE

HAKURARWI

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1998

shall not sleep



HAKURARWI

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BAOBAB BOOKS

chirikure
CHIRIKURE

HAKURARWI

Rutendo

Ndinoda kutenda vose vandinoshanda navo
mubasa rekukusha mazwi, zvikurukuru vana-
gwenyambira veDteteMbira nechikwata chemag-
itare cheUya Moya Band

Ndinodawo kutenda sahwira Charles Mungoshi
nebasa guru raakaita rekuturikira nekutsanangura
nhetembo dziri mubhuku rino.

Ngazvirambe zvakadaro.

Chirikure Chirikure

Kuna

Nyasha naRumbidzai



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Introduction

In 1980, my high school organized a talent competition. The majority of students who took part displayed their skills in classical guitar, the piano, disco-dancing, and so on. I wanted to do something different and I gave a performance of Shona poetry.

This was the first time that I had consciously written a poem which presented the African perspective on current events and issues. It was received with enthusiasm and this encouraged me to do more and do it better.

Being born into a family of Christian teachers but living in Gutu, a rural area, I was exposed to a variety of influences: traditional song and dance, the rhetorical devices of the Christian preachers, and the more carefully honed, self-conscious techniques of urban performers.

At school I exploited my knowledge of these various styles, gradually growing more confident on the stage, until I began presenting pieces which reflected my own ideas.

At university, I enjoyed the work of other performance poets, particularly those from South Africa, and the black community in Britain. This, coupled with my own growing maturity, led me to experiment not only with different styles of writing but with different ways of performing poetry.

By the time I graduated, I was writing poetry in a comparatively free style, partly to make it more accessible and partly because this is the traditional Shona way of presenting poetry. I also experimented with various methods of dramatizing my lines on stage. With help from lecturers and theatre club students, I began to present my poetry with song, dance, mime, etc. Later, I began experimenting with a number of musicians. Now, I perform solo, or with the support of Dete Mbira, a mbira music ensemble, as well as with an electronic band, Uya Moya.

As with many other poets, each poem is stimulated by different situations and experiences. A poem may turn in my mind for days without my putting it down on paper. Sometimes a particular occasion may stimulate a poem and I find myself reciting it. However, when I sit down to write, the words, the lines, the voice, will flow, taking on their own rhythm... a rhythm which will lie in my deeper

consciousness – although not every poem works on paper, as it does in song.

Being a performance poet is often hard. I occasionally ask myself why I sacrifice my time, my family, my friends, to long nights rehearsing or performing in sometimes difficult places. There seem few tangible or explicit returns that might justify the long hours when one is feeling tired or discouraged. Moreover financial constraints limit your audience to certain classes – not, for example, those of the village where your spirit was moulded. Your voice does not always find its echo.

But ours is a society in transition, and I believe that if you feel you have something to say, you must stretch out your arms to say it. You must acknowledge society's cracks and dents, in order to prevent our dream crumbling to smithereens.

Let us treasure the word!

Chirikure Chirikure





The sacred caves

An old man stands still as a stump in his yard, looking at the hill to the west of his home. He can hear the sound of children's voices playing on the hill, probably in the caves once considered sacred and used to store grain and the silver and gold treasures of our ancestors.

Should he chase the children away? Or should he just leave them alone?

The caves were looted and left empty during the war. All that remains are five tins labelled: 'Beef – Rhodesia Army Rations'.

The old man lowers his eyes and like a hunter returning home empty-handed, slowly makes his way back to his hut to sleep – in broad daylight! Only his thoughts shed tears for what his people have lost.



Mapako

Samusha vamire setsiga pakati peruvazhe,
Maoko avo akati nga kusunga chiuno chishwe.
Vachiti zvino twiriri, meso akakandwa mavirira;
Chavadaro ipwere dziri kuita nhambetambe muchikomo.

Mumwe mwoyo uri kuti dzivisa pwere dambe iro:
Chikomo ichi chaiva chizere chiremera kareko,
Chiine ndarama nemidziyo inokosha mumapako acho,
Nezviyo zvisingapfutwi zvavanasekuru mudzihari.

Asi mumwe mwoyo unoti siya pwere dzakadaro:
Inga wani mapako akasara angoti n'ono muhondo!
Changosara maari chete magaba esimbi mashanu,
Magaba akanyorwa kuti: *Beef—Rhodesian Army Rations.*

Samusha zvino vadonhedza maziso pasi semwenga,
Zvinyoro-nyoro hevo vononovara semuvhimi mhotsa,
Hevo, muimba yavo yekuvata ngori masikatiwo.
Urozvi hwavo ndihwo huri kungoti misodzi ngara ngara!



We fought this war

This poem is told in the many different voices of those who claim to have fought and won the Zimbabwean war of Liberation.

The overseas students who claim to have raised funds, sought the support of the international community, and prepared themselves, through study, to govern.

The combatants over the river who recruited, trained and conscientized new fighters.

The freedom fighters who fired the guns and suffered the hardships of sleeping in the open bush, in all seasons.

The *mujibbas* and *chimbwidos*, messengers and beasts of burden, who carried weapons and did reconnaissance work, washed the fighters' clothes and cooked for them.

The parents in the villages who supplied the fighters with clothes and food and kept up their morale with songs and prayers to the ancestors. Having heard the competing claims, the narrator asks who among them all can now feed today's hungry children.

Yakarwiwa nesu

Inzwai!

Hondo iyi yakarwira nesu isu vaive *overseas*,
Ndisu takaita *mobilise* mari nerutsigiro rwekunze,
U'ku tichirovawo chikoro, kugadzirira *future* yenyika.

Aiwa!

Hondo yakarwiwa nesu isu taive mhiri kwenzizi,
Ndisu taiyambusa nokuita *conscientise* vakomana nevasikana,
Nokuvadzidzisa kubata gidi pamwe nokushanda nevabereki.

Kwete!

Hondo yakarwiwa nesu isu vanamukoma vemusango,
Ndisu takarova gidi uku tichiita *politicise* ruzhinji,
Tichirara musango muchirimo, muzhezha nemuchando.

Bodo!

Hondo yakarwiwa nesu isu vanamujilbha naanachimbwido,
Ndisu taitakura zvombo uku tichiita *reconnaissance*,
Tichiwachira varwi nhumbi, uku sadza tichibika mabhodho.

Nyangwe!

Hondo yakarwiwa nesu isu vabereki mumamisha,
Ndisu taitenga nhumbi, matanga tikatsvaira ose,
U'ku tichitsigira nemorari, midzimu tichiteketera.

Hongu, tinotenda!

Hondo yakarwiwa, ropa rikayerera, misha ikaparara.
Nhasi nyika yataida yava yedu, takaisunungura,
Asika, ndiani ane kiyi dzedura renyika pakati penyu,
Ativhurire tinokorere vana zviyo tivabvuwire kasadza.
Hezvo miromo yavo yati papata kunge vapoteri vehondo.

You tell it all

The poet/narrator challenges the freedom fighters to tell their story, to tell us of their exploits, how they crossed crocodile-infested rivers, climbed sacred mountains, confronted wild man-eating animals, and so on. These stories will remind future generations of the sacrifices that were made, the courage that was displayed in the struggle for independence.

Then the narrator offers the caution that such stories should not be told in order to induce false admiration and adulation; they should not provide a screen behind which our 'heroes' can fatten themselves on the riches of the land.

Donongodza zvako

Donongodza zvako nhoroondo yako –
Kurovera kwawakaita moyo padombo,
Nzizi dzawakayambuka nedzinengwena,
Makomo awakakwira neayo anoera,
Zvikara nezvipuka zvawaikweshana nazvo,
Iwe uchiramba uchingoti pamberi nekushinga.

Donongodza zvese izvi, nezvimwewo –
Ndiko kuti isu pwere dzanhasi uno,
Tizviise mukatikati medzihana dzedu,
Tichizopakurirawo vemangwana zivo iyi,
Zivo yekuti uchi nemukaka zvanhasi izvi,
Kuuya kwazvo wainge usiri mutserendende.

Donongodza zvako nhoroondo yako!
Handioni chakaipa apa, mhare yedu,
Ndokunge chete chinangwa chako pamoyo,
Kusiri kuda kundiita chikuku-vata-vata,
Ndichizoswera ndongokushumira saZame,
Uku iwe uchimora wega uchi nemukaka.

We shall not sleep

Here, the poet assumes the voice of a village turned against a recalcitrant son: We shall not sleep until calm is restored and matters are settled. The culprit in question has committed a number of crimes against the community: breaking well-known traditional norms, stirring up trouble, creating havoc among the villagers – and no one has ever retaliated – that is until this moment. The poet becomes specific – the culprit insulted an old woman (or his grandmother); sold family property (without consulting anyone); burned down the granary (the family's only source of food and livelihood); and now this same unrepentant son has shat in the communal well! The repetition in the last stanza – *tsvina mutsime*, echoes a popular Shona saying which can only be loosely translated in Ian Fleming's words as: once is happenstance, twice is coincidence; thrice is enemy action. Something must be done.



Hakurarwi

Gore rino hakuvatwi

tisina kuzvigadzira

Rino gore hakurarwi

tisina kuzvipedza

Hatingaregi uchiwondonga, takangotarisa

Hatingaregi uchibvoronga, takangonyarara

Hatingaregi uchiwondomora, takangodzvondora

Hatingaregi uchibvonyonga, takangoduka

Zuva riya wakatuka mbuya, tikazvinyarara

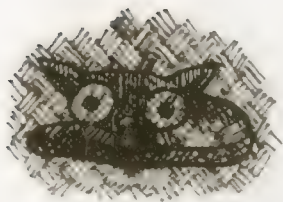
Riya zuva wakatengesa pfuma, tikangonyarara

Nezuro wakapisa dura, tikazvinyarara

Nhasi woisa tsvina mutsime?

tsvina mutsime?

tsvina mutsime?



Stand up!

In this poem the poet challenges his audience and does not hide his scorn. His challenge is abrasive. From childhood, he says, you have taken things lying down. You have made yourself believe that you were born to be ruled, born to be oppressed. (The repetition of the words *ndakazvarirwa kutongwa* suggests bitterness in this context.) And the poet concludes with the question: who do you think was born to rule? Stand up and walk – meaning show pride, don't demean yourselves.

Chirikure notes that the last, repeated lines: *simuka ufambe* (lit. stand up and walk) are taken from the Biblical parable – suggesting that the people being addressed were like the lame to whom Jesus said: stand up and walk. (There is nothing wrong with you, you only think there is.)

Simuka

kubvira paupwere

dzamara muguva

rumbo ndirworwo

ndakazvarirwa kutongwa

ndakazvarirwa kutongwa

semaonere ako

panyika pano

vekutonga ndevapi?

simuka ufambe

simuka ufambe

Fate

Misfortune should only concern you when it results in defeatism.

We turn our faces to the wall – while lizards shit in our cooking pots: then we wonder why our children suffer from diarrhoea? The day this disease becomes chronic and our children all die – will be the day when this (self-fulfilling) belief in bad luck burns itself out.

(The last line implicitly challenges us to discard the fatalistic belief that there is nothing that can be done.)

Munyama

Munyama watinawo ndemumwe chete:
Kuregera zvichimwirira munjere dzedu
Izvozvo zvekufunga kuti tine munyama.

Hezvo tongopunyaira takayeva madziro,
Madzvinyu achiitira ndove mushambakodzi,
Vana gore dha-a vachiyuwira nemanyoka.

Zuva richakomba urwere hwepwere uhu,
Tichizokavira dzinza rose pachuru semhodzi,
Ndinoona ndipo pachazofumhwa munyama.

Mouse-trap

The key-word in this poem is *riva*: meaning mouse-trapping or setting mouse-traps. (Mice are a traditional Shona delicacy).

The poet addresses a leader. (In Shona culture, national leaders, chiefs or leaders of a village or a people are usually referred to as fathers of the family. Thus, in this poem, the poet is addressing anyone in a leadership position.)

Like a fool, you let a snake enter your house (i.e. you allow things to go wrong in your own home, village, state, etc.). The snake hatches and lays its eggs there (the first omission of responsibility leads to further wrong-doing). And you don't do anything about it.

You leave your home (state or village) ostensibly to seek a remedy overseas (over the river), but, really, the purpose of your trip is to set your own mouse-traps, to make your own secret deals, to fatten your own purse – in other words to enrich yourself.

In the last stanza the poet warns the irresponsible, self-aggrandizing leader that your own children (or subjects) are aware of your antics. And one day, you will come back home to find they have set a trap for you. (In other words: while you were hunting for mice (a delicacy) away from home, you allowed decay to flourish and now your own people are hunting you down!)

Riva

nyoka inopinda mumba
yokandira nokutsotsonya mazai
iwe uchinyatsa kuzviona
serema, wosona muromo

wava mhiri kwerwizi
kure kure, kuvatorwa
uchiteya mariva ako
wotaura seune shungu
hanzi mhuri yangu yaparara

ziva chinhu chimwe, hama –
mangwana vana vako chaivo
uchawana vakuteya neriva
riva rine dyiro inonyiminya.

Look to yourselves!

The poet's voice (which is often the traditional Shona communal voice or voice of conscience) asks the community: What do you mean when you say your home is destroyed – are you not, in fact, the home? (In other words: you are responsible for destroying yourselves!)



Musha watsakatika?

Mashaiwa dzimwe nyaya here?

Hanzi musha watsakatika!

Musha watsakatika nhai?

Aizve! Musha wacho chiiko?

Handiti musha ndimi!



Impossible!

Using simple traditional homilies, the poet questions our commitment, and willingness to stand firm. Loosely translated the poem reads:

You pick up this,
and you pick up that;
you drop this,
and you drop that;
You build here, and build there,
You pull down this, you pull down that.
Before you've begun, you have finished.
A thousand (confused) priorities all in one head;
A thousand fields
And only one hoe (to weed them);
Think!
What are you doing?

Hazvigoni

Chino nechino bate

Icho nechochi siye

Pano neapo vake

Apo nepapo putse

Usati wasimuka watogara

Usati wagara watosimuka

Usati watanga watopedza

Usati wapedza watotanga

Zvirongwa zana nemakumi

Musoro uchingova mumwe

Minda gumi neinoraudzira

Badza richingova rimwe

Iwe!

Hazvigoni!

The honey thieves

The poet again takes the podium of the old
courtier or chief's advisor and he advises them:
look at whosoever enters your territory.

They come from all possible directions:
from the top, from the bottom; from behind and
from the sides.

Don't let us fool ourselves
listening to soothing bedtime stories:
all they want is to get their hands on the
honey. Why do we stand by, looking on, allow-
ing them to blindfold us?
Why do we encourage them with ululation and
applause – are we only to wake up after they have
plundered our ancestors' beehives?



Mikoko

Vamwe vanofarira kupinda nezasi,
Vamwe vanoda zvekupinda neseri,
Vamwe ndivo vanoda kupinda nedivi.

Ngatiregei zvekupedzera nguva kungano
Kana kuradzikana nezamu kunge svava:
Chavanoda chete chete apa kumora uchi.

Sei tichiitwa chikuku-vata-vata takatarisa,
Tichitotsigira nemhururu pamwe nemanja,
Tichizopepuka mikoko yasekuru yati gwagwada?



Carrying the whole world
(on your head)

The poet says: and this is a voice cautioning the I-know-it-all I-can-do-it-all people – be they male or female. If you are just such a somebody with just such an attitude, watch out! No one can be master of everything! So, the poet (neither man nor woman, to neither man nor woman) says:

Now that you have taken it upon yourself to carry (or balance) the whole world on your head as if it were a big basket full of grain be careful: first of all, make a comfortable cushion for it.

Hold onto it firmly,
when you walk,
mind your step
you could fall down and break it.
And even if you don't fall down –
Isn't it too heavy for you?

Kudengezera nyika

Zvawafunga zvekudengezera nyika,

Kuitakura kunge dengu rako rezviyo,

Chitanga hako wakunga hata,

Woitidzi panhongonva, zvinyoronvoro,

Woiibatirira nemaoko maviri, zvizere,

Pasi uchitsika semwenga akarairwa.

Kusadaro unokoromora ngozi!

Nyangwe kudaro uchangoikoromora ngozi!

Discord

Using the metaphor of the choir, the poet challenges the chorister who cannot sing in harmony.

You have messed things up, brother. You can't keep in tune and you have thrown us into discord. We sound like frogs croaking in the Mungezi River in the rainy season.

Don't you know that if we are to hold a successful ceremony to call the ancestral spirits to assist us we must sing in harmony? Our enemies will rout and destroy us. Even our children will despise us because we have failed to rally our ancestors to their protection.

If you can't sing, brother, admit it, step down, and let those who have the gift to sing, sing!



Dhisikhodi

Ndiwe munhu azokanganisa zvino, mwana wamai –
Woti kukwidza inzwi, ugoti kubvarura dhisikodhi!
Hezvo wativhiringa, tose maimbiro angova
madirativhange,
Rumbo rwose rwenge madzetse ekwaMungezi
muzhezha.

Hauzivi here kuti midzimu yatakaunganira pano iyi,
Rumbo rukasayerera sederere kunoedza isina
kubuda?
Tichati kupera nemhandu, tigoti kunyara pamberi
pepwere,
Vadzimu varamwa kuuya kuzovhumbamira nhiyo
dzavo.

Kana zvekuimba zvichikunetsa, mwana wamai,
bvuma,
Bvuma, usudurukire kure, vane chipo chekuimba
vaimbe!



Let the thief be killed

(This poem was inspired by a story told by Micere Mugo)

The poet here seems to be looking at a particular people who have one particular law for dealing with thieves (or such people). This is the Law. All must obey it – that is until a better one replaces it.

They found the thief (man or woman) in the fowl run, two chickens in their arms while the others quacked and hopped about. There was no doubt that a robber was in the run.

The whole village gathered together. They flogged the thief into unconsciousness, they trussed the culprit up and left him/her to spend the night in the cold. The following day, they found the prisoner dead.

The poet says: if it has now become our custom to kill thieves, then let us kill them all. Don't let us have double-standards. Why kill the one who is caught and forgive the other who is stealing from under our very noses? Indeed why do we bow before such brazen opportunists as if they were gods?

Mbavha ngaipondwe

(Kutevedza pfungwa dzaMicere Mugo)

Vakamuwanikidza arimo muchirugu.

Ainge akadzigukuchira huku mbiri,

U'ku dzimwe dzichingova kwiyo kwiyo!

Hapana akapokana nazvo izvi —

Iyi yaiva mbavha, gororo.

Vakakorodzana musha wese,

Ndokumurakasha mwanakomana,

Vaona aota. kwakumuita mbiradzakondo.

Ndokumusiya akadaro muchando —

Kwakazoedza angova chando!

Kana mbavha mbatwi dzichipondwa,

Kubva, mbavha ngaipondwe zvayo!

Asika, ko uyo anoba makatarisa?

Munomusiireiko akadaro uyo uyo?

Zvakare munotomunamata saMwari!

Now that it's no longer possible

The phrase (or idiom) *kubwanda nechigunwe* repeated in the first line of each of the three stanzas literally translates as 'hiding behind your finger'. It is a well known Shona metaphor for something that is plainly not possible.

In this poem, the poet considers someone who has been cheating his/her people, believing all the time that they haven't noticed what he is doing. They now want the truth – come out from behind your finger!

The poet says, it is time for the leader to make a clean breast of his/her misdeeds and failures.

A time to lay bare his/her falsehoods.

Where are those great plans that you told us would ensure our survival?

Don't hide behind your finger.

Zvazvisingachaiti

Hazvichagoni kuhwanda nechigunwe:

Mutumbi wako zvino wenge uya wenzou,

Naiko kuchapfanya machikichori zuva nezuva —

Mvura kunaya kana kusanaya hazvina siyano!

Hazvichakwanisiki kuhwanda nechigunwe:

Zvigunwe zvakan'en'enwa navana hove nangwena,

Naiko kutuhwina muhwasvisvi hwedziva reundinini.

Ko, pane chinoera kwauri here nhai nhai?

Zvazvisingachaiti kuhwanda nechigunwe,

Chizarura masiwo ako neese aya emukati kati,

Ruzhinji rupinde munzanga rwuzvionere rwega:

Ndezvipi zvirongwa zvacho zvawaiti uri kuronga?

If things get tough

A short, dangerous poem in which the poet's satirical voice refuses to be categorized. It is universally acknowledged that you cannot push human nature too far:

When things get tough
We will tighten our belts

If things get tougher –
We will pull our belts even tighter

But if they get tougher still
something will break.

Alternative solutions – whatever they may be
(the implication is ominous)
will have to be found.



Zvikange zvagozha

Zvikange zvagozha

tinosunga dzisimbe

Zvikange zvagozhesa

tinosungisa dzisimbe

Zvichinge zvazogzhesesa

tichasungisisa dzisimbise

Zvikazenge zvazogzhesesesa

mbariro dzemusoro dambu

tose tomuka zvigeven'a



Teargas

Another very satirical piece. Anyone in power, in control, a despot, can speak in this way in order to keep things under control – for better or for worse!

The poet doesn't, however, spell this out but takes the image of a 'father' advising a visitor on how to handle delinquent children who 'ask questions that don't have answers' or 'look into situations that defy explanation' or 'cry for food which you haven't put on the table'. This despotic father tells his visitor that he has the perfect solution: 'first turn the water hoses on them and then throw teargas canisters at them. Even the most hot-headed or stubborn of your children,' says the father, 'will kneel down and pray for forgiveness.'

Utsi hunokachidza

Teerera unzwe machewe

Tuvana twukada kudziyirwa

Kubvunza mibvunzo isina mhinduro

Kutonongora zvausina tsananguro

Kuchemera chausina kuisa mudura

Kuteketera mvura yenyota pandima

Kunan'anidza kwakaenda pfuma

Kuzvipedza zvimanyawi izvi

Pandiri pano ndine zano guru

Unovadira mvura yemupombi huru

Wozopedzisa neutsi hunokachidza:

Kana ane shavi unoona akupfugamira.

Dry bones

The poet deplores the loss of good traditional values through the onslaught of modern, mercenary, dictatorial mores. The poet asks what happened to the custom that required people to put their heads together to discuss problems; the spirit that moved a neighbour to remove the thorn from another's foot; the custom that forbade a father from gorging himself with food while his children starved; or the one that said children should be remonstrated (with love) and not have their heads chopped off.

The implication is that the opposite is happening now that these customs have been discarded. This is made clear in the second stanza when the poet says: 'Son of the soil, if things go on like this, the country will turn into a playground for jackals'; the nation will sink while we cheer'.

The poem concludes with a question: when everyone is dead (through the readers' misrule, of course), who will the same power-hungry leaders rule?



Marangwanda

Wakaendepi mweya uya nhai

Wekuti nyaya inoisirwa musoro pamwe?

Wakaendepi mweya uya nhai

Wekuti abaiwa tinotumburana munzwa?

Wakaendepi mweya uya nhai

Wekuti baba havadyi voga vana vachiziya?

Wakaendepi mweya uya nhai

Wekuti mwana anorangwa, haadzikwi demo?

Zvikaramba zvakadaro, mwana wevhu,

Nyika ichava dandaro remakava!

Zvikaramba zvakadaro chete, mwanawe,

Nyika inotsakatika isu tichipururudza.

Zvino sabhuku angazotonga aniko

Musha wese uchipunyaira nehasha?

Changamire kutonga vangatonga aniko

Munhu wese wese angova marangwanda?



The way

Another short, subtle poem in which the poet assumes different voices in counterpoint.

On the one hand, the politician says: He/she who refuses to see or follow the way (suggested by the politicians?) should be exposed.

On the other, the voice of the people is heard saying that if this particular politician/leader doesn't fulfill the needs of the people, he/she should be taught to do so.

Deny whoever doesn't follow the right way! Deny him/her a spouse, land, employment, etc. Deny him/her all possibilities of survival (until he/she is forced to see/understand the way *we* are going/the route that has been taken).

Gwara means the way. The question is: Whose way? Who is speaking? And who are 'We'. Each one who hears or reads the poem is enabled to interpret the poem in their own way.

Gwara

Aramba kutevedza gwara
ngaaratidzwe!

Tati, aramba kutevedza gwara
ngaadzidziswe!

Basa achaita rekurota
Mari achaita yekuvhumuka
Mukadzi chichava chishuvo
Imba achava manhenda
Zvemunda kana kutomborota!

Aramba kutevedza gwara
ngaaratidzwe!
Kusangodaro munyika ino yeropa
tinova chiseko!

Yet another conference

(to Ozias)

This is one of the most powerful satirical poems in this collection. The narrator is pursuing his daily activities and addressing his people before he embarks on one of his many 'consultative' trips – trips which in this context are causing the people much concern. The poet doesn't explicitly voice these concerns. He simply lets the leader speak for himself:

'Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to bid you farewell before I jet overseas, to London, to attend an important conference, the purpose of which is to look at the ways and means of holding another conference,' and so on and on, *ad nauseam*. The last line reads: 'But we will see you again before we say another goodbye!'

The poet's skilful mastery of this form is shown in the way he lets the man speak for – and thus condemn – himself, by revealing the futility of his many trips. The second stanza is masterly in its control of irony: 'Isn't it you who said that nothing comes from sitting on your buttocks? I am glad that my family always accompany me, for without them my marriage would have foundered.'

Kumusangano zvekare!

(Kuna Ozias)

Ndati ndizokuonekai vana mai nababa
Mangwana ndiri mundege zvakare, veduwe
Rwendo runo takananga mhiri, kuLondon
Kune musangano mukuru watichanogara
Tinenge tichironga mazano akadzama
Mazano atichazoshandisa pamusangano
Musangano watichazoita pasure peuno
Nekuti iwoyo uchazotevera uno
Uchange uchizoteverwa nemumwezve mukuru
Saka tichiisa misoro pamwe saizvozvi

Inga ndimi makati wani magaro haana chawo
Zvinotoda kushinga zvamunoona kudai izvi
Rombo kuti mukadzi nevana tinoenda tose
Kusadaro mainzwa kuti imba rangova dongo

Tokuonai towonekanazve rwendo runouya.

What kind of game are you playing?

The poet assumes the voice of an elder and asks:
'What kind of game is this when you throw sand
into one another's eyes? Ram burning coals down
each other's throats? Gag and truss one another
up? And lock each other in damp, dark prisons?

'Is this the way to play with others?'



Matambiroi?

Matambiroi iwawo?

Kudirana jecha mumaziso?

Kupakana mavhunze mumukanwa?

Kusungana mbiradzakondo?

Kuvharirana mubako?

Matambiroi nevamwe iwawo?



Tears of a child

Hunger, the loss of a beloved, loneliness, represent the plight of this child who cries over his/her dead mother. This is war. The mother has been shot dead by men who 'are fighting for the people'.

The poet seems to ask: If you are fighting for the people, you are also offering them a better future. So, what future have you to offer this child?

Translated, word for word, into English, this poem might seem over-written (a tear-jerker) but in Shona where the imagery used forms part of everyday conversation, it works.

Musodzi wendumurwa

Ndinoona musodzi uchidzatuka muziso rendumurwa,
Musodzi uzere neshungu, chinya nedzungu chairo.
Ndinoona uchiyerera nepadama rizere man'a
nemhezi,

Musodzi uchikukuzva mhokotorwa dzinenge dope.
Ndinoona uchidzika pachifuva chinenge dehwe
remombe,

Musodzi uchitambura kuyambuka mbabvu dza-
kati tinini.

Ndinoona uchipfuura wakananga dumbu rinenge hari,
Musodzi uchidzimbira maronda adhavazwa nenhunzi.
Ndinoona musodzi uchisvetuka kubva padumbu ren-
dumurwa,

Musodzi uchinomhara pachifuva chaamai, mai
vangova chando.

Ndinoona musodzi uchinyangarikira muchifuva
chamai,

Chifuva chakapaziwa-paziwa nemabara nemapakatwa.

Mukati mesango muno makadai kuzara zvikara,
Zvikara zvinokwikwidzana nemabhinya anozviti varwi,
Handioni ndumurwa iyi ichibudisa mumwezeve
musodzi!

Kunyange ikabudisa, unongoperera pana mai vakarota!

What are you afraid of now?

Using the collective voice of black people, the poet asks the white people of this land: since you were brave enough to leave your own motherland, daring many perils to come out here and build your homes among us, what now makes you afraid to live and share this life with us?

The last line is quite strong: Why are you afraid to drink from the same cup with us now?



Chomozeza chii?

isu kuno

imi uko

mujambwa nemujakwara

mungwavaira nemujakwaira

hongu, mungaropota zvenyu

muchitoganza chaizvo paruzhinji

hanzi ropa richinge rakasiyana

hazvigoni kuti mutambe ngoma imwe

asika, zvamakashinga kusiya zvole

zvole misha, hama nemakuva anasekuru

muchiyu kuzodzika bango pakati pedu

chomozeza kunwa mumukombe mumwe nesu

chii?



A train journey

This, the longest poem in the collection and the most autobiographical, is told in a sober, thoughtful voice and describes the poet's personal experiences as he takes a sight-seeing trip through some unnamed European country. As the journey begins he sits alone in a compartment and watches the natives as they try to avoid sitting next to him. Self-pitying thoughts – what wrong have I done? – assail him but later, gathering his sense of dignity, he throws caution to the winds by deciding to join them in the dining car. At first, they stare at him but he doesn't care. He sits at an occupied table and orders food. Once seated, he starts a conversation. The seemingly cold response daunts him at first but, finally, an elderly man asks him where he comes from. His questions reveal typical stereotypes and prejudices: Did you run away from the war in your country? Or starvation? Unemployment? Are you seeking education?' And when the poet tells them he is a university graduate on business – people warm to him. Questions follow hard on each other as they offer him food and drink and the poet is struck by their hospitality. Sadly he notes that they are just as human as he is, just as curious to

Ndiri mhiri

Ndini uyu, mwana wevhu ndopupira nerufaro,
Ndirimo mukati-kati menyika yevaya-vaya.
Chando chakati mburetete kudaro hachinei,
Ndaronga rwendo rurefu nechitima cheko,
Shungu dzemoyo kuri kuda kuona nyika yavo.
Inga handiti zvavo zvese zvese zvazvo ikoko –
Nzizi, makomo, matunhu, maguta kana miti –
Taizvimanikidzirwa kuziva kuchikoro nepaupwere?

Ndini uyu, mwana wevhu ndirimo muchitima,
Ndigere zvangu iwe mutiroko kumirira kusimuka.
Gare gare mapinda jaya nemhandara, zvizvarwa;
Kungoti meso kwandiri tsve, zviso vasunga,
Ndiye dari dari kuchinja tiroko sevaona tsvina.
Pano nepano vamwezve ngoma ndiyo ndiyo –
Chitima kudzamara kusimuka ndiri ndega
Pfungwa kuzviona dzazviona: hazvisi zvega izvi!

Hecho iwe, chokuchuma nekuzvonyongoka chitima.
Kuyevedza kwenyika iya handichatombokuoni,
Mwoyo warohwa, wasunama nemashura aya.
Mangwanani ese ndiri kungodzeya pfungwa iwe!
Pava paya ndiye chechu, bengenu bengenu:
Ndiri munhu mhani ini, iyeni mwana wevhu!
Chandinogonyera mukona imo muno umu chii?
Rega ndiende kukahotera kemuno muchitima ndinodya!

learn about him and his people as he is to know about them. For one moment the poet feels too proud (in revenge for their initial hostility?) to satisfy their curiosity but then in the telling last line of the poem he asks himself : Where will this (reluctance to open up to other people) lead the world? ('World' here is used to mean the human race.)

Kungonoti pindikiti muya, wanei makati pa-a!
Vose kungondiona ndiye zi-i sepasvika muroi,
Ini mumoyo handinei nazvo; pandada ndiye go.
Vandagarisana navo meso ongonzi razvu razvu,
Ini zvangu zii, ndichitsindira kudya kwangu,
Pava paya moyo woti regai ndizame nyaya:
"Mune nyika inoyevedza, nyika ine maoresa.
Chando chete kani! Kwedu izvozvi imbaura!"

Adavira ndiye ashaikwa kwezinguva ziguru.
Pava paya mumwewo wechikuru ozobvunza:
"Kwako kunopisa kwaunoreva kwacho ndepi?"
"Afrika! Ndiko kwandakazvarwa, kwandakabva."
"Wakatiza hondo? Nzara? Kushaya basa? Dzidzo?"
"Kwete, hakuna hondo. Chikoro ndakaita chikurusa!"
Kuzodaro, vamwe vacho vorebesa nzeve nemeso,
Ini ndongoti pamwe nane ndibate zvangu muromo.

Nguva diki, mumwe onyatsa kubvunzurudza!
Iyazve, aikaka, izvi vose shungu ndedzekuziva?
Hezvo ndochitsetsenura rungano rwangu rweze —
Kuzvarwa, kudzidza kwose, nezvemabasa zvose.
Kuzongoziva kuti ndizvo zvandiri, mwana wevhu,
Kudya nokunwa kwoita kunaya semvura yehore,
Mwoyo uchimbotti ramba, siya vakadaro,
Asi mumwe uchiti: Zvigosvitsa pasi rino kupi?

If it were possible

This is the voice of a young man growing up in a poor country beleaguered by harsh economic conditions. He asks his parents to put themselves in his shoes so they can better understand what is happening to him. He says: 'If it were possible that you could become a child again then you would understand what it feels like to play in this desert with no education, no money, no jobs, no food, no health facilities – where any hope for a better future is bleak.' The repetition of the opening line to every stanza – '*Dai zvaigoneka*': makes the young man's cry for understanding as urgent as any SOS appeal for food-relief, clothing, etc. for a war-torn country. The images of personal suffering are graphic and the poem's message is quite clear.

Dai zvaigoneka

Dai zvaigoneka, vanamai nanababa woye,
Dai maimbodzoka kuita vana vadiki,
Muchiyaruka muri muupenyu hwanhasi,
Pamwe maizonzwa kuti zvimire sei!

Dai zvaigoneka,
Maimbotamba sikiti nenhodo mugwenga,
Muchiziva kuti nyika yaimbovawo neuswa,
Asi pasina anoda kudura chakaunza gwenga iri.

Dai zvaigoneka,
Maimboswera muchiritaira nenyika,
Chikoro chakavakwa nedikita rababa chiripo,
Asi muchiudzwa kuti pasina mari hapana dzidzo.

Dai zvaigoneka,
Maimbohwanda dzimwe pwere dzezera renyu,
Muchinyara kunzi uri mwana werovha,
Asi uchiziva, urovha hakuzi kuda kwevabereki.

Dai zvaigoneka,
Maimborara muchigomera nemabayo,
Muchishaya mukana wekurapiwa sevamwe:
Kuri kushaika kwemishonga kana kusada kwevabereki.



Dai zvaigoneka,

Maimboita kudva, kupfeka nekurara zvekurota,

Nyika kwamuri ichinge yakakuramwai.

Ramangwana richingova mhindo yemuna Zvita.

Dai zvaigoneka,

Dai zvaikwanisika,

Kudai zvaimboitika,

Pamwe maizonzwa kuti zvinhu zvimire sei.

Where were you?

Where were you all this time while I gave my love to the winds of the world? Where were you hiding while I gave my heart to mad people who cared nothing for it? Where were you when they scrubbed the dirt off their floors with my heart, when they bruised and abused me? Where were you when my eyes bled tears of unfulfilled love? Where were you? Where have you been all this time? You come to me today when I am useless? When I am torn and worn out? What shall I do with your love now? You have come too late, I am no longer of any use to you, I am but a container full of holes.

Wakanga uripi?

Wakanga uripiko,
Ndichipa mwoyo wangu kumhepo dzenyika.
Kupedzera rudo rwese kumadzenga enyika.
Iwe uripo zvako wemwoyo mutsvene?

Wakanga uripiko,
Ndichikorobha tsvina kunge mvemve.
Ndichiita kutanyangwa kunge mbwanana.
Iwe uripo wehana yakati dzika?

Wakanga uripiko,
Ndichiita rudo rwekungoonera kuhope.
Mwoyo wangu uchisvimha misodzi,
Iwe uripo werudo runobvinina?

Wakanga uripi?
Wakanga uripiko?
Wouya nhasi ndasakara,
Kuuya zvino ndaparara?

Wakanga uripiko?
Rudo rwako ndoisepiko?
Wauya ndava deze,
Deze rizere maronda!

First Street, Harare

This is one of those poems which don't read as well as they sound, the narrator/poet's dramatic skills lending them their strength.

The poem comments – as anyone might – on certain familiar characters one sees in Harare, on First Street. People who, by the manner in which they walk or speak, seem to make themselves out to be more than they really are. For example, Jeremiah, just a young man from your local neighbourhood, walks down First Street as if he owns the town. And Jojina, another home girl, seems to walk on tiptoe, and look at everything and everyone as if they had crawled out of a hole. Only you and I, the poet says, know about these people. Back home, they are among the poorest of the poor: they have little food, no decent shelter, no money... But this is Harare where people must put on masks to appear more than they really are. The tone is necessarily satirical as it pokes fun at these presumptuous or preposterous characters. The poem also implicitly reflects popular oral tales which are designed to make people more honest or sincere, by belittling those who pretend to be other than they are.

First Street muHarare

NdiJeremiah here uyu wekumaraini,
Kufamba anoita kusvetukira?
Jojina here chaiye mwana wekumusha,
Kusvinura anoita zvekudongorera?

Pasi panotsikwa penge pane mbaura,
Chatariswa chose chenge chinosemesa,
Kucheuka kwacho, chipembere chaicho.
Vari pasi havana chavakaona!

Anozviziva ndini newe chete, kuti,
Kwabviwa kwacho, kudya manhenda,
Pokurara pachu, mukoko wenyuchi,
Zviri zvemari, nane kunyarara.

Ndiyo ino First Street muHarare:
Nhamo hainyorwi kumusana.
Ndiyo yacho Harare hama yangu:
Zvidhonze, ndinozvidhonzawo.

Poverty

The title of this poem doesn't translate itself well into English – and the subject itself is more familiar among the poor. The tone is humorous, light, a voice that could belong to a conversation between friends, or between people travelling on public transport or in Emergency Taxis. It will **make people laugh, an uneasy laugh.**

It is a poem that needs to be read aloud or performed to achieve its real resonance.

When poverty falls in love with you
it will take you along gently
up sharp inclines down steep slopes
it will take you through sticky mud
it will take you through deep sand
until you are deflated (depleted of strength.)

When poverty falls in love with you
don't behave like a bicycle
don't break down (so that it will
leave you alone). It won't
leave you alone. It will pick you up
on its shoulders, then throw you far
out into some deep gorge full of thorns.

So, don't do it
Don't let poverty fall deeply in love with you.

Nhamo yakuda

Kana nhamo ichinge vangokuda chete,
Inokusesedza zvinyoro-nyoro sebhasikoro.
Ugokwira makata, ugodzika materu,
Ugokanya nhope, ugocheka nemujecha.
Dzamara wati fototo sebhasikoro repenjeni.

Nhamo yakuda, ukada kuiitira zvebhasikoro,
Kuvhunika masipokisi kuti usasesedzwa,
Inokuti biku, igokuti pamafudzi dzi,
Igozokuti sai mumapiripiti azere minzwa.

Usambofa wakazviita kana kamwe zvako,
Kuregera nhamo ichiperera murudo newe!

A thing without value

A philosophical poem about something that has no value? The poet is singing of the value of things we call valueless. In the second stanza, he gives us the example of a man who picks up such an object. The next thing we know or see is this same man smiling on his way to the bank. He found use for that useless thing.

Chinhu chisina basa

Hapana munhu anoda chinhu chisina basa,
Nokuti chinhu chisina basa hachina nebasa.
Ko, chinokupeiko icho chisina pundutso?

Asika, panoita mumwewo mukati mevamwe,
Anongokaruka anyuka, mwene sebenzi benzi,
Otoro ichocho chinonzi chinhu chisina basa,
Aongorora anoona basa rine kusava nebasa kwechinhu,
Mangwana momuona ava neupenyu hune pundutso,
Kutoriritira mhuri nechinhu chisina nebasa rose!

Saka chii chisina nebasa pano panyika?

The mbira player

The poet sings the praises of an mbira player, an artist whose status in (traditional) society is considered dubious (parents wouldn't dream of allowing their daughters to marry an mbira player).

But, the poet observes, you need the mbira player just as much as you need the other things in your life. The mbira player communicates with your ancestral spirits. Whenever you want to talk to your ancestors you call on the mbira player!

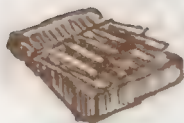


Gwenyambira

Wakati iwe gwenyambira irombe,
Rombe, mhupo inopupuruka nenyika,
Zvino chowoita nhasi chii ichochi,
Kupaza mitunhu nemitunhu semuvhimi.
Uchitsvaka panosiya gwenyambira hope?

Zvawakati iwe gwenyambira irombe renyika,
Chidzokera kumana kwako kwawabva,
Unorova bira rasekuru iye asipo tigoona!

Kuchaidza kuti hwe-e pasina sekuru vasvika!



Blessed are you

The poem provides a cynical view of burial rituals. *Wafa wakanaka* is how the Shona put it whenever they speak of someone who has just died. Once one is dead, one is good. In this poem the narrator looks ahead almost wistfully at the day of his death when everyone 'will speak well of me, and my misdeeds will be forgotten.'

Blessed are they that will bury me when I die for they shall have a lot to say about me at my graveside. Even their tears for my demise will be sincere. They won't even clown about and act drunk because their hearts will be tied up in knots. How can you not find words to praise me when the work I did for you in my lifetime speaks for itself? How can you not mourn my passing without deep sorrow when I never said a bad word to anyone throughout my life? How can you laugh or joke over my death when there is not a single one among you whose property I stole? How can you behave disrespectfully and drunkenly at my graveside when I never despised or looked down upon any one of you? I say, blessed are you who will bury me because you will bury me with all your hearts!

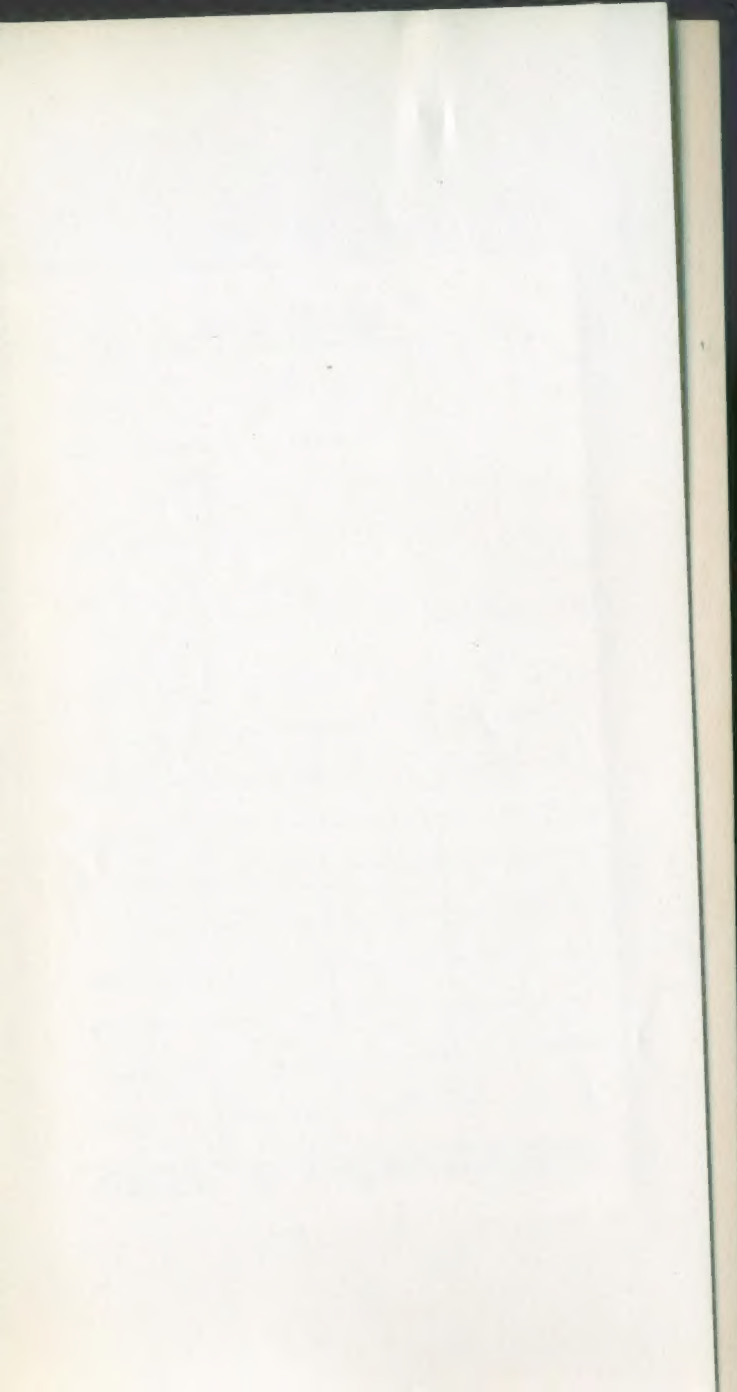
Makakomborerwa

Makakomborerwa avo vachandiviga,
Nekuti hamutsvakiridzi zvekupupura,
Kana kuchema hamuiti kwechirango,
Kana zvemuchohwe nekudhakwa hamuiti,
Nekuti mwoyo inenge iri chishwe.

Mungashaiwa zvekupupura sei,
Ndimba yangu ndakachovha nesimba?
Mungatadza kuchema neshungu sei,
Ndisina mumwe andakaridzira tsamwa?
Mungaita zvemuchohwe sei,
Pasina chemumwe chandakavhomora?
Mungaita zvekudhakwa sei,
Ndisina chandakaruma ndikasadya?

Makakomborerwa imi vachandiviga,
Nekuti muchaviga munhu nemwoyo yenyu!





Hakurarwi, We shall not sleep, is an appropriate title for a dramatic poet of Chirikure Chirikure's stature and originality. Deeply imbued with a sense of traditional values, and sharply perceptive, he probes and juxtaposes the contradictions, confusions, cant, and subterfuge that bedevil the behaviour and attitudes of those who do not want to look critically at and play a part in the development of ourselves, our nation and our culture. Evasion and hypocrisy form the butt of his jokes, his criticism, his challenge to us to wake up, rise up, think for ourselves.

Hakurarwi! Simba ufambe! Simuka ufambe!

This collection of thirty poems in Shona, written to be read and performed, have been given English translation by Charles Mungoshi, with a view to giving a different audience an appreciation of the nuances of language and its dramatic rendering in poetic form.

*Zvinyoro:nyoro, pasi pasi; zvine udzamu neunyanzvi,
munhetembo dzino Chirikure anotonongora twakawanda
twaanoona tuchiparadza unhu hwedu, nyika yedu, zvinangwa
wa zvedu!*

*Kungararwa sei ipo paine vamwe vari mubishi kusvibisa
tsime?*



BAOBAB BOOKS